



Northern Great Plains Network

Inventory and Monitoring Monthly Report

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Organizational Changes: The Regional Director has recently made a change to how the Network I&M Program operates. The change—which is effective October 1—applies to all three I&M networks in the region as well as the two EPMT programs. Whereas the I&M Program Coordinators now are supervised by the networks (specifically, the host park superintendent), under the change the Coordinators will now report to the region. Representatives from the three I&M networks and the two EPMT programs in the MWR tried to dissuade the Regional Director from making the change, but to no avail (thanks to Ralph Moore, Andy Banta, Bill Supernaugh, and Brian Kenner [on my behalf] for their efforts). No convincing or logical reason was given for the change; however, the Regional Director did say that things were working fine the way they are which was good to hear. The Regional Director's change does conflict with the Northern Great Plains I&M Network Charter (which explicitly calls for supervision by the host-park superintendent); how to reconcile this will have to be determined.

Post-doc Project: The I&M Program has reached an agreement with Dr. Josh Millspaugh of the U. of Missouri to have him prepare the monitoring plan for the Network. Dr. Millspaugh has recruited Bob Gitzen to work on the project in a post-doc capacity (Bob will receive his Ph.d. late this year). In addition to Bob's fulltime commitment, Josh expects to spend about 10% of his time on the project as well. Bob will be duty stationed with the I&M Program in the Black Hills and will be under the day-to-day leadership of the I&M Coordinator. His sole task is to complete the monitoring plan (his title will probably be something like "Monitoring Plan Manager"). He will coordinate and integrate the ongoing efforts of Dr. Amy Symstad, Dr. Nels Troelstrup, and other contributors to the project as well as taking the lead on many other aspects (e.g., wildlife monitoring). The 2-year project will start January 1. The project costs \$123k and includes significant contributions by the university. Both Dr. Millspaugh and Bob are familiar with the Great Plains and Black Hills, have excellent writing and publication skills, are exceptional quantitative ecologists, work well with people, and have a "big picture" ecosystem perspective.

Vital Signs Meeting: Planning for the September 14-15th Vital Signs selection workshop is moving forward. Approximately 30 outside experts have committed and several others are pending. The meeting with the experts and partners will take place on the 14th and the parks-only meeting will occur on the morning of the 15th. The meeting will be at the Ramkota Best Western in Rapid City (additional logistical information will be sent via email). With the exception of Mt. Rushmore NMEM, all parks have scored the draft list of Vital Signs for significance to the park. Additions to the list were suggested so those new Vital Signs will be circulated to the parks for scoring prior to the meeting.